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ABSTRACT

In this unit on the dictionary, for the eighth grade, sample worksheets and discussion questions employing excerpts from various dictionaries (e.g., "English Dictionary 1775," "Cawdrey's A Table Alphabeticall, 1604," "Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary." and "Webster's Third International Dictionary") both (1) encourage students to consider the purpose of a dictionary and to understand the distinction between prescription and description, and (2) make students more conscious of the limitations of a dictionary as recorder rather than legislator of language change and variety. Consideration is given to underlying concepts about language usage and processes of change in language--generalization, specialization, degradation, and elevation. Sample examination questions, suggested class activities, and a bibliography are provided. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (MF)

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Unit 805

The Dictionary: Describer or Prescriber?

ED041881

CAUTIONARY NOTE

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TE 001 269

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW OF UNIT

As the title of this unit suggests, one of the major objectives is to have students consider the purpose of a dictionary and to make the distinction between prescription and description. This purpose has been accomplished mainly through discussion of the controversy over Webster's Third International Dictionary and through comparative entries from dictionaries of both orientations. Students are also led to consider why speakers of English have long considered the dictionary the authority in questions concerning language.

It is hoped that students will become more conscious of the limitations of a dictionary and of its obligation to keep pace with language change and variety. The implication of much of the discussion is that, since change is inevitable and initiated by the speakers of the language for which the dictionary is written, the dictionary's aim cannot be to legislate, but primarily to record. Five basic concepts about language underlie the unit: 1) Language changes constantly. 2) Change is normal. 3) Spoken language is primary. 4) Correctness rests upon usage. 5) All usage is relative.

Consideration is given to the kinds of changes in meaning that one can trace through use of a dictionary and that the lexicographer must be sensitive to. Among the processes of change discussed are generalization, specialization, degradation (pejoration), and elevation (amelioration). Some attention is given also to euphemism.

It is important to note that this is not a unit on "how to use a dictionary" and assumes that students are fairly familiar with dictionary terminology. Nor is this unit intended as the sole source of information on lexicography in the series of units developed by MPEC. Students were given an introduction to the work of lexicographers in Unit 703; in grade eight they were introduced to the concepts of standard and non-standard speech, together with the idea of levels of usage. Lexicography is again discussed, in somewhat different context, in grade 10 where the emphasis is on change in lexical meaning; in grade eleven the student is given an opportunity to study regional variation is speech, again using dictionaries, and in grade twelve the student reviews lexical change before considering changes in phonology, morphology, and syntax.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Sledd, James and Ebbitt, Wilma, editors, Dictionaries and that Dictionary. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1962).

Also see bibliography at end of unit.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How many of you have either used or heard someone else use the word "ain't" as in "I'm going too, ain't I?"?

2. How do you feel about this word? Is it a word? If so, is it "correct"? What do you think about people who use the word in conversation?

   (Responses will vary greatly, but attempt to get the students disagreeing about the word. It should not be long before one of the students suggests checking the dictionary.)

TEACHER NOTE: Emphasize the tendency for Americans and British to consider the dictionary an authority. This tendency is not new. In 1880 in Britain, a bill was removed from Parliament since it contained a word which was not in "the Dictionary."

3. Before checking the dictionary, I'm anxious to find out why you think the dictionary will help us in our discussion of "ain't."

   (Some students will no doubt consider the dictionary as the authority, the guide to right and wrong inlanguage. Perhaps someone will claim that the appearance of "ain't" in the dictionary will establish its status as a "word." In order to draw out the degree to which the dictionary is held in esteem, inquire as to how many students have dictionaries in their homes and how frequently in the past they have been asked to check the dictionary for the "correct answers" in matters of punctuation, spelling, and word meanings.)

4. What do you guess the dictionaries will say about "ain't"?

   (Although the responses are likely to vary, a number of students will expect the dictionary to take some sort of stand, at least to indicate that less educated people use the word.)

TEACHER NOTE: Since the use of status labels such as "dialect," "slang," "sub-standard," and "standard" will be an important consideration in the unit, discuss the meaning of these terms if students are not familiar with them. The chart in Appendix A and questions in Appendix B are included for this purpose. Terms and distinctions introduced in other MPEC units include: 703 - dialect; 802 - standard/non-standard, formal/informal, usage; 901 - educated, slang.

5. Now let's check the dictionaries and discuss the results.

   (SAMPLES FROM COMMONLY USED CLASS-ROOM DICTIONARIES:
   Webster's New Collegiate: "used in dialect or illiterate speech."
   Webster's New World: "Colloq., am not: also a dialectal or substandard contraction for is not, has not, and have not: Ain't was formerly standard for am not and is still defended by some authorities as a proper contraction for am not in interrogative constructions. . .")

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

IMPORTANT: Stress the power of the status labels in convincing a reader of the "correctness" of a word, often with little attention given to context by the reader.

6. How does what you found in the dictionary influence your feelings about the word?

   (Many students will perhaps recognize "ain't" as a word on the basis of its being in the dictionary. If so, you might ask them if it would or would not be a word if it did not appear in the dictionary. Other students will recognize that "ain't" is used by speakers of the language, but feel that one should not use it if he wished to be considered "educated."

7. What, specifically, in the dictionary entries would make you hesitant to use the word?

   (Most students will mention the status labels: "dialectal, "substandard," "illiterate speech")

8. Do these labels imply that the word is bad? Are there instances when using the word would be appropriate?

   (In certain dialects or in situations where the receiver uses the word himself; in informal speech.)

9. Why do most of us seem to feel, however, that any use of the word is "incorrect"?

   (We have been told that educated speech is "correct" and do not wish to deviate from it for fear of making a bad impression or being denied entrance to a certain social group.)

10. It seems, then, that one reason we tend to refer to the dictionary so frequently is that we have a great desire to be "correct" so that we will be considered educated and will be permitted entrance to certain social groups. The same thing was true in 18th century England, when there was a growing middle class to which many people aspired and which had a "dialect" many people needed to know in order to be accepted.

    Perhaps there is still another reason why the dictionary is considered an authority or guide to correctness. Does anyone know why a discussion similar to the one we have had about "ain't" would be unlikely in France, Spain, or Italy?

    (These countries refer questions concerning language usage to groups of scholars whose purpose is to "refine" and control the language and decide what is correct.)

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

France: French Academy
Italy: Accademia della Crusca
Spain: Royal Spanish Academy

England and the United States do not have such academies. Thus, people have turned to the dictionary as the authority and often expect to find rules or statement about what kinds of people use the words or phrases in question. English speakers frequently use the status labels we have just discussed to decide the "correctness" of a word.

11. What would you say if I told you there was a dictionary which avoids the use of labels such as "dialectal" and "illiterate" and furthermore states that "ain't" is "used orally in most parts of the U. S. by cultivated speakers"?

12. The dictionary I have reference to is called Webster's Third International Dictionary, and was published in 1961. It is an unabridged dictionary, containing 450,000 entries, 100,000 of them new. Because of the dictionary's statement about the word "ain't" and because of some major changes it made in lexicography, Webster's Third created a great deal of controversey. Many people took the positions you have today, and because the controversy gets at some basic issues concerning the purpose and use of the dictionary, we are going to examine some of the reactions of its audience.

    The first thing we should do is try to discover some of the major differences between this dictionary and the ones you have been using in the classroom. I will distribute to you now two entries for the word puff, one from Webster's New Collegiate and the other from Webster's Third.

13. What are some of the first things you notice about the Webster's Third entry which makes it different from the other entry?

    (1. Greater number of meanings provided; defintions more detailed.
    2. More complete etymology, or account of word's origin.
    3. Extensive use of "citations" or quotations to illustrate each meaning.)

NOTE: Some students will perhaps disagree with Webster's Third's information itself, while others may object to the dropping of labels on the grounds that the reader might not know what is "correct." Again, try to establish the various positions represented in the class, and create as much controversy as possible. You may wish to summarize the positions on the chalkboard or on a handbook.

IMPORTANT: Point out that the purpose o discussing Webster's Third is primarily to get at issues that exist in the field of lexicography, not necessarily to learn many facts about Webster's Third itself.

PROCEDURE: Distribute copies or project a transparency of the entries and have students examine and compare them.

PROCEDURE: Ellicit from the students the significant differences between the two entires. Likely responses are given at the right, although some of them may require extensive questioning and aid from the teacher.

I. ENTRY FROM WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY:

puff (pŭf), n. [ME. puf.] 1. A sudden and single emission of breath; hence, any sudden or short blast of wind; a slight gust; whiff. 2. a A form of light pastry that has puffed in cooking. b A soft pad for applying powder to the skin of hair. c A soft, loose roll of hair. d A bed covering fill with cotton, wool, or down, and quilted or tufted. 3. a A protuberance from swelling; as, a puff of flesh. b In clothing, a mass formed by a strip of material gathered at the edges and left loose in the center. 4. An empty expression of praise, esp. one in a public journal. ---v.i. 1. To blow in puffs; to emit puffs of wind, smoke, steam, or breath. 2. To become inflated; ---usually with up; as, the sails puffed up. ---v.t. 1. To blow, emit, drive, or expel, with or as with a puff or puffs of wind, breath, etc. 2. To swell or expand; to inflate. 3. To praise exaggeratedly. 4. Toiletry. To arrange in puffs, as the coiffure. --puffiness, n. --puffy, adj.

II. ENTRY FROM WEBSTER'S THIRD INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY:

[1]puff \ pəf \ vb -ED/-ING/-S [ME puffen, fr. OE pyffan, of imit. origin] vi 1 a : to blow in short gusts: exhale forcibly or escape in a cloud <a fresh salt breeze ~s across the bay> <the gatherer~s lightly into the blowpipe to shape the molten glass> <the dust almost~ed out of the door when we opened it -- Molly L. Bar-David> b : to breathe hard because of exertion : PANT <was~ing heavily when he reached the top> c : to emit a series of little whiffs or clouds (as of smoke or steam) often as an accompaniment to vigorous action <~at a pipe> <the kettle~ing, and the tea all set out -- Adrain Bell> <snorting,~ing river steamers that churned their way to the city -- Amer. Guide Series: Maine> d: to discharge a powdery cloud of spores <changes in temperature of humidity may cause some ascomycetes to~> 2 : to speal or act in a scornful or conceited manner : BLUSTER, POOH-POOH <a~ing turkey-cock of a man, full of himself and of false patriotism -- E. S. Morgan> <it is . . . to defy Heaven to~at damnation -- Robert South> 3 a : to become distended : SWELL -- usu. used with up <a sprained ankle~s up> b: to open or appear in or as if in a puff: ERUPT, EXPLODE, EXPAND, POP <the spin chute~s out behind the hurtling plane> <flak was~ing all around -- F. V. Drake> <twice, little spot fires~ed up on the wrong side -- G. R. Stewart> c : to make exaggerated statements or claims : BRAG <a considerable amount of~ing . . . was part of the sales talk that induced the marriage -- Morris Ploscowe>; specif : to advertiase in glowing terms <~ing . . . is well understood by a public immunized to the superlatives of the marketplace -- F. V. Harper> ~vt 1 a : to propel or agitate by means of short gusts : blow in whiffs or spurts: WAFT <people who eat peppermint and~it in your face -- W. F. Gilbert> <a brisk breeze~s the clouds away> <bullets . . .~ed up the white dust all around him -- A. Conan Doyle> b : to extinguish by blowing -- used with out <~out a candle> c (1) : to say breathlessly: PANT <"wait for me, "he~ed, doing his best to keep up with the bigger boys> (2) : to render breathless : wear out <twisted the rope around faster and faster, until he was~ed -- Dannie Abse> d : to draw on (as a pipe or cigarette) with intermittent exhalations of smoke <found that when people~two cigarettes alternately, the cannot in fact tell the difference between them -- Martin Mayer> e : to apply with a diffusing device (as a powder puff) <neck, still white with the powder she had~ed there after her bath -- Wright Morris> 2 a (1) : to distend with or as if with air or gas : INFLATE SWELL <green lizards~out their throats like thin red bubbles -- Marjory S. Douglas> <~ed out his chest and pranced around the chair -- Daniel Curley> (2) : to fluff up or pad out : EXPAND, STUFF <the~ed and tufted furniture -- Norman Mailer> <the manuscript of her work has been submitted . . . for this one to prune and that one to~out -- Wilfred Partington>; specif : to arrange (hair) in puffs b (1) to make proud or conceited : ELATE, GRATIFY <public acclamation

~ s his ego> <might have become morally ~ed up if a healthy corrective had not been administered--A. W. Long>(2) : to cause to swell with anger : ROUSE <audience ~ s itself to storm the gates -- D. M. Friedenberg>c : to praise extravagantly : OVERRATE, EXTOL <hit too many homers and people start~ing you up -- Willie Mays> <do not ~impossible trash, but they do let people . . . know what is interesting and worth reading -- Mary C. Fair>; specif : ADVERTISE <traders . . . still ~their goods as if the whole aim of their toils were just to achieve a single transaction -- C. E. Montague>

2puff \"\n -s [ME puf, puffe, fr. OE pyff, fr. pyffan] 1 a : an act or instance of puffing : WHIFF, GUST <storm which set out as a mere ~of wind thousands of miles away -- Carey Longmire>; specif : CAT'S - PAW 1 <when you reef for a land breeze study the duration of the ~ s -- Peter Heaton> b : a slight explosive sound accompanying a puff : HUFF <let out an irrepressible little ~of laughter -- Marguerite Steen> <listen to the ~of a sitant locomotive> c : a perceptible cloud of aura emitted in a puff <let ten ~s of his pipe eddy away -- F. M. Ford> <sat back . . . in a fluff of soft fur and a ~of expensive scent -- Anne Panish> d : something that resembles a puff <a clear blue sky with only a few ~s of cloud sailing in it -- Clifton Cuthbert> <can all be blown away with one ~of clear common sense -- Stuart Hampshire> e : PUFFBALL 2 a : a hollow or airy substance : as (1) : a dish that puffs in cooking <corn ~> <potato ~>; esp : a light pastry that rises high in baking (2) : a tall drink that consists of an alcoholic liquor, milk, and soda water <brandy ~> <gin ~> b (1) : a disease of the tomato of unknown cause characterized by fruits that are light in weight and hollow (2) : WINDGALL 1 3 a : a slight swelling : PROTUBERANCE b : a fluffy mass : as (1) : POUF b <a dainty ~of sleeve at the shoulder> <great ~s of blue hydrangea blossoms -- Placide Martin> <bird didn't even have time to get its wings open before pellets ripped it into a ~of feathers -- Barnaby Conrad> (2) POWDER PUFF (3) : a soft loose roll of hair usu. wound over a pad and pinned in place -- called also pouf (4) : a quilted or tufted bed covering filled with down or fiber -- called also pouf c : a padded ridge or piece or wadding; specif : TOE PUFF 4 a : an exhibition of arrogance or ostentation : BLUFF, SHOW <showing off for each other . . . like housewives putting on a ~at a party -- John Steinbeck> b archaic : one that exhibits arrogance or ostentation : BRAGGART, SHOW-OFF c: LADIES' MAN <thought actors were a lot of ~s -- Stewart Granger>5 : a commendatory notice or review <pleasant letters came to me on my birthday . . . and one or two ~s in the newspapers -- O. W. Holmet 1935> <interested in political ~s, not news -- W. A. Swanberg> <the play got ~s from several critics>; specif : BLURB <~s with which booksellers sometimes embroider their catalogs -- John Carter> <firm does not favor . . . publicity stunts or ~s for goods on sale -- Persuasion>

NOTES:

1. Students who have had Units 701 and 703 should appreciate the significance of context in understanding the meaning of a symbol. Call students' attention to quotes by John Steinbeck and Willie Mays in particular, since one of the distinctive features of Webster's Third is the use of quotations from contemporary sources. Quotes from so-called "classical" writers such as Dryden and Pope have been dropped, although the Bible and Shakespeare have been used extensively.
2. It is important for the students to notice at this point that the use of the word "puff" by Wille Mays is not labeled "slang" or "colloquial"and is not set apart from other meanings of the word in terms of frequency of use of status.
3. Students will perhaps notice that the system of indicating pronunciation is different in Webster's Third. You may wish to collect further examples from Webster's Third for comparison with the pronunciation guide in classroom dictionarises. The "puff" entry will allow students to see the adoption of the phonomic symbol schwa, /ə/. (The system used in the Third is not entirely phonomic, although it employs a different symbol for each distinctive sound.) This represents an improvement over Webster's Second which, for example, used 5 different symbols for the same unaccented vowel in sofa, silent, connect, circus, and maker.
4. You might discuss the changes in pronunciation guides as a reflection of the increasing influence of linguistics on lexicography. The editors of Webster's Third maintain that (1) every distinct significant sound should have a distinct symbol to represent it and (2) no sound should be represented in more than one way. Students who have had MPEC Unit 801 should realize the significance of this change.
5. Although students will be unable to draw such a conclusion from the "puff" entry alone, they may be interested to know that an effort has been made in Webster's Third to include more commonly used words, often thought of as "slang", such as beat, hep, and beatnik, and more terms from science and technology, such as laser, bionics, travolator, astonaut, and cybernetics.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

It is now necessary for us to consider why the differences we have just discussed are important to our study of the dictionary. In other words, what do they reveal about the aims of the lexicographer? How might they help us to understand the entry for "ain't" and the abandonment of many status labels?

1. Why do you suppose the definitions so detailed and the number of meanings for each word so great?

   (The editors apprently feel a dictionary is responsible for an accurate recording of as many meanings of a word as possible, judged by their observation of speakers of the language.)

2. Why is there such an extensive use of "citations" or quotations?

IMPORTANT POINT

   (The editors believe that the "authorities on how a word is used are the speakers and writers of the language; futhermore, it is not possible to determine the meaning of a word without feeling it in <u>context</u>.")

3. Why are there quotations from people in such non-scholarly areas as baseball?

   (The editors apparently believe that the meaning of a word is not restricted to how it is used by people in academic areas or in formal situations. The reader of the dictionary is provided with as amny meanings of the word as he may encounter in various situations.)

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NOTE: You may wish to read part of editor Philip B. Gove's introductory statements to the class

4. We have seen, then that many of the changes come from a consistent effort by the editors to record English as it is actually used by speakers and writers of the language, in a variety of situations. We have yet to consider one of the changes which created a great deal of the controversy about this dictionary--the change in the use of status labels. Examine the Webster's Third entry for "puff" and see if you can find any status labels such as dialect, slang, illiterate, colloquial.

   (There are none.)

5. Are there any quotations in the entry which you think could be labeled with these words?

   (Students might identify those by Stewart Granger, John Steinbeck, Willie Mays, O. W. Holmes. Hopefully, there will be some disagreement about the status of a particular meaning of a word.)

NOTE: Several explanations for the reduced use of status labels in Webster's Third can be found in the volume Dictionaries and That Dictionary, edited by Wilma Ebbitt and James Slidd (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1962). See especially those by Gove, James Slidd and Millicent Taylor.

6. I'm interested in knowing how it is you decided that these particular uses needed labeling, and also how you went about determining which of the labels should be chosen.

   (As the students respond, try to establish the difficulty of categorizing a word, especially since we have a very limited knowledge of how the word is used by a great number of speakers. Finally, labeling a word is difficult because of the rapdily changing status of a word and the increasing use of slang, colloquialisms, etc. in the speech of the educated.)

Transition

The area we have just been discussing has been the source of the greatest controversy over the Third. Although you have seen that the dictionary consistently avoided the labels and had some reasons for doing so, the innovation was not well-received by many readers and critics. Controversy centered particularly around the word "ain't," which we will go back to now.

PROCEDURE: Distribute comparative entries for "ain't."

1. I have just passed out to you two entries for the word "ain't." One is from Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary and the other from Webster's Third International. You will notice once more that the entry from Webster's Third is more detailed and uses many examples of the word in context. But what I'd like you to look for now is the information given on who uses the word and what its status is.

   (Webster's New Collegiate uses the status labels dialect and illiterate, whereas Webster's Third does not. Furthermore, the information given by Webster's Third is different. It states that although "ain't" is less common in the speech of the educated, it is "used orally . . . by many cultivated speakers.")

2. Does Webster's Third report that all meanings of "ain't" are used orally by many cultivated speakers?

   (No. It states that some uses are sub-standard and gives examples.)

3. Here is the entry from Webster's Second, (1952 revised edition) for "ain't":

   ain't : (ant) Contraction of are not, used also indiscriminately for am not, is not, have not, Cf. HAIN'T Dial. or Illit.

4. How has the entry for "ain't" been changed in the Third?

Unit 805
Excerpt #2

COMPARATIVE ENTRIES OF "AIN'T"

I. FROM WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY:

ain't (ant). Contraction of are not, and used also for am not, is not, has not, and have not; ---now used in dialect or illiterate speech.

II. FROM WEBSTER'S THIRD INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY:

ain't \ ant \ also an't \ also 'ant or like AREN'T \ [prob. contr. of are not, is not, am not, & have not] 1a: are not ⟨you ~ going⟩ ⟨they ~ here⟩ ⟨things ~ what they used to be⟩ b: is not ⟨it ~ raining⟩ ⟨he's here ~ he⟩ c: am not ⟨I ~ ready⟩ ---though disapproved by many and more common in less educated speech, used orally in most parts of the U.S. by many cultivated speakers esp. in the phrase ain't I. 2 substand a: have not ⟨I ~ seen him⟩ ⟨you ~ told us⟩ b: has not ⟨he ~ got the time⟩ ⟨~ the doctor come yet⟩

(The Third implies that"ain't" is in more widespread use by educated speakers, and doesn't label all of the uses as "indiscriminate.")

5. How do you account for the change in information?

   (Perhaps use of the word "ain't" has actually changed and is used more frequently in the speech of the educated.)

6. Now let's look at some of the reactions to the "ain't" entry in Webster's Third.

PROCEDURE: Have student read "The Death of Meaning," The Toronto Globe & Mail, September 8, 1961 (Reprinted by permission in Dictionaries and THAT Dictionary by James Sledd and Wilma R. Ebbitt; Scott, Foresman & Co., Chicago, 1962; p. 53.) and "It 'Ain't' Good," The Washington Sunday Star, September 10, 1961, Reprinted by permission in Dictionaries and THAT Dictionary by James Sledd and Wilma R. Ebbitt; (as above) p. 55, to students. Following the reading, have them complete Worksheet #1, orally or in writing.

UNIT 805
WORKSHEET # 1

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. "The Death of Meaning" states that "ain't" is not acceptable, except when used ironically, in any educated conversation. What evidence does the article give to support this statement?

2. What evidence do you suppose the editors of Webster's Third could give to support their statements about "ain't"?

3. What do you think the writer of the article means when he says, "the English language has been corrupted" and "pushed into decay?" What evidence does the writer give to support such a statement?

4. The article suggests that "ain't" might fail to "convey precise meanings." Explain from your own experience hearing and/or using "ain't," why do you agree or disagree with the article.

5. How great an influence do you think the author assumes the dictionary has? Quote one or two statements from the article to support your point.

6. What do you believe the author thinks is the purpose of a dictionary?

1. The article "It 'Ain't' Good" states that Webster's Third "contains a number of startling revisions." How many of the revisions we have observed does the article discuss? What seems to be the main concern of the author?

2. What is the author's attitude toward change? Do you see any connection between this attitude and his feelings about the Webster's Third entry for "ain't?"

Unit 805
Worksheet #1 Cont.

3. Of the 100,00 new words in Webster's Third, many are, in the word's of Editor Philip B. Gove, drawn from "the vocabularies of geographical and occupational dialects, and of the livelier levels of the speech of the educated." As a result, the word beatnik was included in Webster's Third. Judging from the views of change and "respectable" words held by the author of this article, would you expect him to approve of the inclusion of beatnik? Does it surprise you that the author would use this word in the last paragraph of the article?

4. Does the article give an accurate report of Webster's Third's entry for "ain't?" Explain why you think the author of "It 'Ain't' Good" used the entry as he did.

5. Webster's Second, published in 1934, gives the following entry for "ain't."

> ain't (ant). Also an't (ant; ant). Contraction of are not, used also indiscrimately for am not, is not, has not, have not. Cf. HAIN'T. Dial. or Illit.

The article states that Webster's Second "brands 'ain't as a 'dialectal' and 'illiterate' expression employed by people on the fringes of society." Is this an accurate account of what the entry states? Explain the differences and why the author used the entry as he did.

6. The author of "It 'Ain't' Good" states that "ain't" is an unnecessary word. Is it? What is the contraction for "I am not" in English?

7. The article also states that "ain't" has been "legitimatized" by the Merriam-Webster people. What does the use of the word "legitimatized" reveal about what the author considers the purpose and influence of the dictionary to be?

NOTE TO TEACHER: After student have completed the questions, discuss their answers. It is important that they be able to distinguish statements which report on the content of the "ain't" entry from those which express opinions about the entry or the word itself. You might ask students if, in view of their previous discussions of Webster's Third and its aims, they feel the entry deserves the attention and emotion given in the articles. Emphasize again how the opinions expressed are symptomatic of the desire of many people to have the dictionary control usage and set a standard of "correctness."

1. We have seen, through examining the reactions of some readers to Webster's Third that many people want the dictionary to tell them what is "correct," to control change, and to set up rules for speaking and writing. If the editors of the dictionary did this they would be prescriptive, since they would prescribe what they think is "best" for the speakers and writers of the language, just as a doctor prescribes what he thinks is best for his patients. If, on the other hand, the editor wished merely to record the languages of the speakers, the would have descriptive aims. Which category do you think the editors of Webster's Third fit into? Why?

   (Descriptive; the reduced use of status labels may be reflection of their desire to refrain from prescribing a "correct" usage.)

2. What category do the authors whose articles you read fall into?

   (Prescriptive)

The desire of English-speaking people to have a prescriptive dictionary is not new. As we mentioned previously, this was especially true in the 18th century. We are now going to look at the Preface to Samuel Johnson's dictionary of 1755 to establish what he considered the purpose of the dictionary and the nature of his audience.

PROCEDURE: Distribute excerpt from Preface to Johnson's Dictionary.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOLLOWING READING OF THE EXCERPT.

1. Do you think that Johnson's aims are prescriptive or descriptive, judging by the excerpt you have just read?

   (prescriptive)

2. Now let's consider what led you to this conclusion. Can you find some specific words or phrases in the first paragraph which indicate that Johnson is prescriptive?

   ("there was confusion to be regulated," "adulterations were to be detected without a settled test of purity;" Johnson would use as the tests "writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority.")

3. Note especially the words regulate, purity, reputation, authority. These reveal Johnson's notion of a fixed standard of "correctness" and his feeling of obligation as a lexicographer to preserve certain aspects of the language.

4. How does Johnson explain variations in English pronunciation?

   (He states that oral language came first, and that words were not "fixed" by writing; thus, various pronunucations arose.)

5. Does Johnson recognize and approve all of these pronunciations?

   (No. He claims that those who cannot read speak "negligently" and calls their speech a "wild and barbarous jargon.")

NOTE: Call students' attention to the fact that the label "illiterate" is used by many dictionaries today, and usages which are labeled "illiterate" are frequently considered "Incorrect" and inferior by many readers.

6. How is this another example of his prescriptive attitude?

   (He believes certain pronunciations to be more "correct" than others and would prefer one pronunciation.)

7. What is your guess as to the position of Webster's Third concerning various pronunciations of one word?

   (It would be consistent, perhaps, with their descriptive orientation; it is likely that many pronunciations are given, with none of them labeled "correct.")

Here, for example, is what the editors of Webster's Third recorded for the word "harass":

\ha'ras, 'haras, —'raa(ə)s, —'ras also 'h… 'ha(ə)r-\

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EXCERPTS FROM THE PREFACE TO JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech copious without order, and energetic without rules; wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulteration were to be detected without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority.

****

As language was at its beginning merely oral, all words of necessary or common use were spoken before they were written; and while they were unfixed by any visible signs, must have spoken with great diversity, as we now observe those who cannot read to catch sounds imperfectly, and utter them negligently. When this wild and barbarous jargon was first reduced to an alphabet, every penman endeavoured to express, as he could, the sounds which he was accustomed to pronounce or to receive, and vitiated in writing such words as were already vitiated in speech. The powers of the letters, when they were applied to a new language, must have been vague and unsettled, and therefore different hands would exhibit the same sound by different combinations.

So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as the wells of English undefiled, as the pure sources of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original Teutonick character, and deviating towards a Gallick structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recal it, by making our ancient volumes the ground-work of stile, admitting among the additions of later times, only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are already adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with out native idioms.

But as every language has a time of rudeness antecedent to perfection, as well as of false refinement and declension, I have been cautious lest by zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and crowd my book with words now no longer understood. I have fixed Sidney's work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excursions. From the authors which rose in the time of Elizabeth, a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible, the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from Raleigh; the dialect of poetry and fiction from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of English words, in which they might be expressed.

8. Would you say, judging from the entry, that Webster's Third is prescriptive or descriptive? Explain your answer.

   (The dictionary seems more descriptive, since no one pronunciation is labeled as correct or best in the opinion of the editors.)

9. I think we can find another contrast between the two dictionaries. First, read the third paragraph of Johnson's preface carefully. Which sentence deals with his attitude toward change in the English language?

   ("Our language . . . has . . . been gradually departing from its orignial Teutonick character and deviating towards a Gallick structure and phraseology from which it ought to be our endeavour to recal it . . . ")

TEACHER REFERENCE: The article "The Authority of the Dictionary" in Dictionary and That Dictionary (Sledd, Ed) for a description of conditions in the 18th century which explains why Johnson might feel such an obligation.

10. What does Johnson feel is the obligation of the lexicographer in view of such changes?

    (To prevent it and limit the number of new words, expressions, meanings.)

11. How successful do you suppose Johnson was at retarding or stopping change in the English language?

    (Not very; a comparison of the above Johnson quote with a modern day "translation" alone would demonstrate the fact that change has occurred, in spite of attempts of lexicographers.)

See Unit 905 for Nathaniel Ward's excerpt on fashion, the old version of the Lord's Prayer, current coining in space age terminology. It might be well to preview these briefly before attempting to elicit answers to #12.

12. Based on your knowledge of change in language, why would you say that most attempts at stopping change in language are unsuccessful?

    (Change is a necessary thing---

    1. We often need new words, phrases, and constructions in order to describe and communicate new experiences and changes in the world we live in.

    2. Our culture is not isolated; because of contact with other cultures, we exchange words, phrases, pronunciations, etc. just as we exchange discoveries, products.

    3. Individuals and subgroups within our society provide innocations.)

Remind students of semantic principle "No one thing stays the same" from Unit 702.

TEACHER NOTE: Depending upon the interest and needs of the class, you may want to use Worksheet #2 to demonstrate the degree and kinds of change in the English language from 1604 to the present day. Emphasize the notion that language is in a continual process of change.

PROCEDURE: Read aloud from the preface to A Dictionary of the English Language by Samuel Johnson (see page 22).

Students might be interested in hearing part of Ambrose Bierce's defintion of lexicographer: "A pestilent fellow who, under the pretense of recording some particular stage in the development of a language, does what he can to arrest its growth, stiffen its flexibility and mechanize its methods."

TEACHER REFERENCE: A famous student of language named S.L. Hayakawa, and whom you may remember from Unit 702 - Semantics has written a paragraph which explains quite accurately the position of the lexicographer who wishes to describe, rather than prescribe: This paragraph can be found in Language in Thought and Action, pp. 55, 56, beginning the words "The writing of a dictionary, therefore, is not a task of setting up authoritative statements."

PROCEDURE: READ THE PARAGRAPH TO THE CLASS AND DISCUSS THE DIFF. BETWEEN THE WRITER AS "HISTORIAN" OR AS "LAWGIVER."

We have seen that Johnson believed that readers in the 18th centruy expected that lexicographer to regulate change in language. We have also established that any attempts to stop change in language are rather futile. Johnson himself realized this and we can see his change in attitude by reading the excerpt I am distributing to you now.

1. Find some key sentences which tell what Johnson believes to be true about change in language and what the lexicographer is able to do about them in spite of what people expect him to do about them:

   (Johnson states there is "no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability." He says also that no lexicographer can "embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay.")

2. Do you think that Webster's Third feels that language change, such as new words and borrowings from other languages, corrupts the language and causes decay? Can you give any evidence to support your answer?

   (inclusion of "ain't" new words such as beatnik, flip, junkies, dig, cool, cats.)

3. Why do you think the editors included these words?

   (a large number of speakers of English use them)

4. Does Webster's Third aim at prescription, then, or description?

   (description, since it does not attempt to regulate the language as it is used by its speakers.)

Name _____

Page 1 from Cawdrey's A Table Alphabeticall, 1604

A Table Alphabeticall,

contayning and teaching the true
writing, and vnderstanding of hard
vsuall English words, &c.
(•.•)
(k) standeth for kind of.
(g. or gr.) standeth for Greeke.
The French words have this ( ) before them.

A

Abandon, cast away, or yeelde up, to leave, or forsake.
Abash, blush
abba, father
abbesse, abbatesse, Mistris of a Nunnerie, comforters of others.
abbettors, counsellors.
aberration, a going a stray, or wandering.
abbreuiat, to shorten, or make
abbridge, short.
abbut, to lie unto, or border upin, as one lands end meets with another.
abecendarie, the order of the Letters, or hee that useth them.
aberration, a going astray, or wandering.
abet, to maintaine.

Above you find page 1 of Cawdrey's first book of "hard words," published in 1604. On this page and the back side of this paper, answer the following questions. (You will need a copy of a current dictionary to complete this exercise.)

1. Assuming the dictionary you are using is a relatively complete one, make a list of the words which were in the language in 1604, but are no longer in current usage.

2. Which words used now have changed spellings?

3. Which words used now changed meanings?

To be read aloud

FROM THE PREFACE TO A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (London: J. and P. Knapton; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755)
BY SAMUEL JOHNSON

Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, require that it should fix our language, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence I will confess I flattered myself for a while; but now begin to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience can justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, or clear the world at once from folly, vanity and affection.

With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are to volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to ehchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertaking of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength . . .

Total and sudden transformation of language seldom happen; conquests and migrations are now very rare: but there are other causes of change, which, though slow in their operation and invisible in their progress, are perhaps as much superious to human resistance, as the revolutions of the sky, or intumescence of the tide.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In spite of the opinions of language scholars such as Hayakawa, and of people such as the editors of W3, the general public often wants the dictionary to be somewhat prescriptive. We have seen that Samuel Johnson, also, failed to comply with many of the wishes of his audience. Why do you suppose people want a dictionary to be prescriptive?

   (They feel there is a "correct" way of writing and speaking, and look to the dictionary as the authority in such matters, Futhermore, they quite often seek entrance to or acceptance by a social group and fear the consequences of sounding "uneducated.")

2. Throughout your study of language, however, many of you have become aware of the great number of varities in pronunciation, vocabulary, and word meanings, and have replaced the notion of "correctness" with "appropriateness." You may remember from Unit 802 that what guides us in our choice of language is the situation and the audience. A person who is able to do this effectively is likely to prefer which kind of dictionary, prescriptive or descriptive? Why?

   (Descriptive; he wants to know mainly the choices at his disposal, not what is invariably "correct.")

3. What does a descriptive dictionary assume, then, about it audience?

   (That the users of the dictionary are well-acquainted with varieties of English usage and are able to select, with the help of the quotations provided, the most appropriate form. Again, we see that what the lexicographers assume about their aims and their readers may be different from what the public expects.)

ATTENTION: Important generalization

4. Another important generalization we have made is that language is constantly changing due to many causes and that the lexicographer cannot control this change. Dictionaries, then, necessarily record change, whether intentionally or not, and one kind of information we can get from the dictionary concerns the history of the language. If we were, for example, to find out how and if a word in the English language has changed in meaning, how could we go about it?

(1. We could look up the word in a dictionary which provides the history and etymology of the word in the entry. For example:

assassin : (F., fr. It. assassino, fr. At. hashshashin those addicted to hashish hemp.)

2. Or we could compare the entries from dictionaries of different historical periods and trace the changes.)

PROCEDURE: Distribute excerpts from Johnson's Dictionary of 1755 and entries (if they exist) for the same words from a recent dictionary. Allow time for class reading. See teacher note which follows.

5. To show how we can discover meaning change by comparing two dictionaries and to determine various kinds of changes, we are going to examine comparative entries from Johnson's dictionary of 1755 and a dictionary published within the last 10 years.

Comparative Entries From: ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF 1755

English Dictionary -- 1755

abeceda /rain. He that teaches or learns the alphabet, or first rudiments of literature.

abracada/ bra. A superstitious charm against agues.

absente/e. He that is absent from his station or employment, or country. A word used commonly with regard to Irishmen living out of their country.

a/dder. A serpent, a viper, a poisonous reptile; perhaps of an species. In common language, adders and snakes are not the same.

alamo/de. According to the fashion: a low word. It is used likewise by shopkeepers for a kind of thin silken manufacture.

amato/rculist. A little insignificant lover; a pretender to affection.

anaplero/tick. That which fills up any vacuity; used of application which promote flesh.

anth/logy. (1) a collection of flowers.

anthropo /logy. The doctrine of anatomy; the doctrine of the form and structure of the body of man.

arse/foot. A kind of water fowl, called also a didapper.

ba/bery. Finery to please a babe or child.

basi/lica. The middle view of the arm so called, by way of pre-eminence. It is likewise attributed to many medicines for the same reason. Quincy.

English Dictionary 1755

beau. (beau, Fr. It is sounded like ho, and has often the French plural beaux.) A man of dress; a man whose great care is to deck his person.

Chiru/rgeon. One that cures ailments, not by internal medicines, but outward applications. It is now generally pronounced, and by many written, surgeon.

ci/meter. A sort of sword used by the Turks; short; heavy; and recurvated, or bent backward. This word is sometimes erroneosuly spelt scimintar, and scymeter.

clo/dpate. A stupid fellow; a dolt; a thickskull.

conve/yancer. A lawyer who draws writings by which property is transferred.

cough. A convulsion of the lungs vellicated by some sharp serosity. Is pronounced coff.

found. a. 1. Foolish; silly; indiscreet; imprudent; inhudicious. Ascham. 2. Trifling; valued by folly. Shakespeare. 3. Foolishly pleased; injudiciously indulgent. Addison. 4. Pleased in too great a degree; foolishly delighted. Prior.

fe/uterer. A dogkeeper; perhaps the cleaner of the kennerl.

go/ssip. 1. One who answers for the child in baptism. 2. a tippling companion. 3. One who runs about tattling like women at a lying-in.

hu/ggermugger. Secrecy;bye-place. There's a distinction betweixt what's done openly and barefaced, and a thing that's done in huggermugger, uder a seal of secrecy and concealment. L'Estrange's Fables.

English Dictionary 1755

to imbe/cile. (from adjective. This word is corruptly written embezzle.) To weaken a stock of fortune by clandestine expenses or unjust appropriations.

ina/ne. Empty; void. We sometimes speak of a place in the great inane, beyond the confines of the world. Locke.

leucophle/gmacy. Paleness, with viscid juices and cold sweatings.

lexico/grapher. A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.

le/xicon. A dictionary; a book teaching the signification of words. Though a linquist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he had not studied the solid things in them as well as the words and lexicons, yet he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man as any yoeman competently wise in his mother dialect only. Milton.

me/thodist. s. (from method)

1. A physician who practices by theory. Boy.
2. One of a new kind of puritans lately arisen, so called from their profession to live by rules and in constant method.

ni/ncompoop (A corruption of the Latin non compos.) A fool; a trifler.

po/cketbook. A paperbook carried in the pocket for hasty notes.

po/peseye. The gland surrounded with fat in the middle of the thigh; why so called I know not.

pota/to. (I suppose an American word.) An esculent root.

English Dictionary 1755

pshaw. an expression of contempt.

pu/isne. (puis ne, French. It is commonly spoken and written puny. See puny.)
1. Young; younger; later in time.
2. Pretty; inconsiderable; small.

pu/ny. 1. Young

re/cipe. A medical prescription

usqueba/ugh. (An Irish and Erse word, which signifies the water of life.) It is a compounded distilled spirit, being drawn on aromaticks; and the Irish sort is particularly distinguished for its pleasant and mild flavour. The Highland sort is somewhat hotter; and, by corruption, in Scottish they call it whisky.

to ve/llicate. To twitch; to pluck; to act by stimulation.

viz. (This word is videlicet, written with a contraction.) To wit; that is. A barbarous form of an unnecessary word.

wa/termelon. A plant. It hath trailing branches, as the cucumber or melon, and is distinguished from other cucurbitaceous plants by its leaf deeply cut and jagged, and by its producing uneatable fruit.

TEACHER NOTE: It is suggested that you read a good portion of the excerpt with the students to familiarize them with some of the abbreviations in the entries from the recent dictionary. Point our spelling changes since 1755, but emphasize that our concern in the discussion will be changes in meaning.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NOTE: Depending upon the second dictionary used for this exercise, these points will vary. Most dictionaries, however, will differ in these ways from Johnson's.

1. Before we begin our discussion of how words have changed meaning, we should examine how the kinds of information provided by the dictionary have changed. What do you notice in the later entries that you don't in the Johnson entries?

   (1. Pronunication guide is more complete and tries to represent individual speech sounds as well as stress. 2. Parts of speech are provided, with traditional terminology. 3. Meanings are separated and numbered. 4. Word origin (etymology) is given for each word. 5. There is less subjectivity in the later dictionary. Johnson's opinion is clearly stated in the entries for viz., lexicographer, imbecile. An inconsistent attitude toward change is revealed by comparing Johnson's entries for imbecile and chirurgeon.)

NOTE: You might have students compare entires from Johson and Cawdrey to emphasize Johnson's innovations. See Cawdrey entry earlier in the unit.

2. Although you are likely to consider the newer dictionary a great improvement over that of 1755 for some of the reasons just discussed, it is important to note that Johnson himself made some important changes in lexicography. You will notice, for example, that some of the words have meanings which are separated and numbered: fond, gossip. Johnson does not use this technique consistently, but it was a new idea which has stayed with us. A second innovation is quite similar to a technique used in Webster's Third and which we have talked about. Look at thefollowing words and see if you can determine what the device is: huggermugger, lexicon, inane.

   ("Citations" or quotations are provided so we can see the use of a word in context.)

NOTE: You may wish to discuss breifly how the Oxford dictionary uses citations and how this dictionary has helped establish the use of citations.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NOTE: You might discuss current words such as lovely, great, and wonderful, which are so widely used that they seem to have no specific meaning. For student reading, see "Wonderful is Worth Saving," by Elizabeth House, Seventeen magazine, June, 1966.

NOTE: For more extensive treatment of generalization and speicialization see Unites 702 and 1004.

PROCEDURE: Have students locate and explain other examples of generalization from the excerpts. (eg - pocketbook, recipe). You might also mention current words which have come to stand for almost anything: thing, concern, matter, business.

3. What we are mainly concerned with here, however, are the kinds of meaning changes words of through, as illustrated by these comparative entries. Look at the very first word--abecedarian. What has happened to this word.

   (Apparently it is no longer in use. It has lost meaning entirely. We would call this word obsolete.)

4. Can you find some other words which show this kind of change?

   (babery, amatorcu ist, anaplerotick, feuterer)

5. What seems to have happened to the word anthropology?

   (It once meant the study of only the body of man, whereas its modern meaning includes "origin, development, races, customs and belief.")

6. Would you say, then, that its meaning has broadened or narrowed?

   (Broadened)

7. Actually, you have already studied this kind of change in Unit 702. Do you recall the term that is given to a widening or broadening of meaning?

   (Generalization)

8. There is an even more common kind of change among English words that involves a narrowing or decrease in the area of meaning. Do you remember what this is called?

   (Specialization)

9. Can you locate and explain examples of specialization?

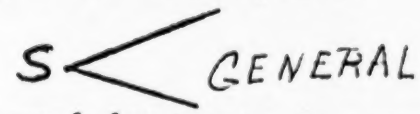
   (adder, gossip)

10. Generalization and specialization, then, are two processes which involve a change in area or range of meaning covered by a word. Perhaps we could represent these changes visually by using some symbols you have seen in music.

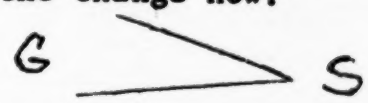
SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

USE CHALKBOARD for these representations of the circle diagrams used in MPEC Unit 702.

If a word increases in area of meaning through generalization, we can show the change with this symbol:



If a word decreases in meaning, we can represent the change how?



11. There is another kind of change which words go through, which is closely related to connotation. You will recall that a word will often suggest favorable or unfavorable things to the speaker or listener. If I called you silly, would you feel complimented or insulted?

    (Insulted; it is a negative word.)

12. If you had been a speaker of Old English (up to 1150), you would have been quite pleased to have been called silly, since at that time the word meant blessed. Has the meaning of this grown more unfavoarable or more favorable with time?

    (more unfavorable)

NOTE: Depending upon your students' ability to handle terminology, you may wish to use the term pejoration as well as degradation, amelioration as well as elevation.

13. Because of this changed from positive to negative, we say the word has gone through the process of degradation, or lowering of meaning. Can you find any examples of degradation in the Johnson and Thorndike-Barnhart entries?

    (beau, inane, puny)

14. There is a process opposite to degradation (pejoration), by which a word moves from an unfavorable meaning to a favorable one. "Nice," for example, once meant "foolish" (1560), and by 1769 meant "attractive or agreeable." This process is called elevation. (amelioration), and is a raising of meaning. Can you find some examples of elevation among the entries?

    (fond, methodist, watermelon)

NOTE: See Appendix A for an optional assignment.

PROCEDURE: Distribute Worksheet #3, which will allow students to test their understanding of meaning change. Classroom dictionaires should be sufficient to provide current meanings. In discussing the worksheet after the students have finished, emphasize that change in generalization or spcialization usually involves a change in elevation or degradation also. Emphasize that these are tew different kinds of changes which often occur concomitantly.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We have seen so far that meaning changes in various ways: in context, as revealed by the citations and quotations provided in many dictionaries, and in time through the processes of generalization, specialization, elevation, and prejoration. The lexicographer's task of recording "meaning" is thus not an easy one. It is complicated also by the process of euphemism, which you might recall from Unit 702 and which, like degradation and elevation, deals with the favorable and unfavorable aspects of word meanings. Euphemism is the use of a terms for some other term considered impolite, shocking, crude, or harsh. It is very common in referring to death. Can you think of some common euphemisms for speaking of someone's dying?

   (passing away, departing, going to one's reward)

2. Now let's see if you can think of some euphemisms for the following:

   a. underwear: (unmentionable, lingerie)
   b. bathroom: (Powder room, lounge, men's or ladies' room)
   c. leg: (limb)
   d. insane: (emotionally disturbed, mentally disturbed.)
   e. hairdresser: (beautician)
   f. janitor: (custodian)
   g. undertaker: (mortician)

3. Why do we tend to use euphemisms for death and for the tings we have just discussed?

   (Some people might be shocked or hurt by the use of the basic term)

Unit 805
Worksheet #3

Name _____

WORD	OLD MEANING	CURRENT MEANING	PROCESS(ES) OF CHANGE
1. cunning	knowing		
2. wife	woman		
3. place	wide street or square		
4. scene	a tent		
5. sly	wise, skilful		
6. injury	injustice		
7. deer	animal		
8. disease	any kind of discomfort		
9. counterfeit	imitate		
10. crafty	skilful		
11. villain	farm laborer		
12. knave	boy		
13. meat	food		
14. silly	blessed		
15. homely	plain, simple, belonging to the home		
16. broadcast	to scatter seeds		
17. governor	pilot, captain steersman		

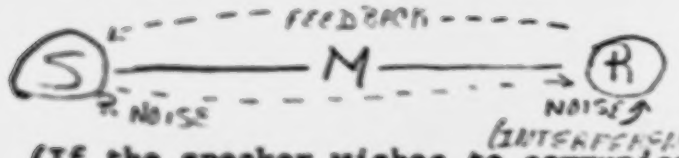
SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

4. Essentially, then, euphemism as a linguistic process is used to reduce shock on the part of the listener. However, some listeners may not be shocked, while others are. What does the use of euphemism say about the speaker? About the kind of individual he is?

   (It may show that he is sensitive to the audience, to the possiblity that he may hurt feelings or shock someone.)

NOTE: See MPEC Unit 703 for a description of this model.

5. Can you explain why a speaker might resort to the use of euphemism in terms of the communication model?



   (If the speaker wishes to communicate, he wants as much of the message to get across as possible and, therefore, he wants as little interference as possible. Shock would constitute "noise" or interference and would interfer with the message.)

At the beginning of this unit, we read a newspaper article from the Toronto Globe & Mail which attacked Webster's Third. You may not have noticed at that time a statement which deals with the notion of euphemism:

"(The English language) has been preverted by special pleaders who rejected the precision of such words as prisoner and insane for the euphemism of such words as inmate and emotionally disturbed."

What is the attitude of the writer toward euphemism?

(He is opposed; he feels it is less precise and a perversion of the language.)

Do you agree?

You may wish to point out that the variety of names for an event or thing allows us to express varying shades of meaning.

Euphemism, then, presents a problem for the lexicographer, since he must try to record euphemistic uses of a word and be sensitive to people's attitudes toward such uses.

SUGGESTED CULMINATING ACTIVITY: To emphasize the problems and isssues facing lexicographers and to help students review the kinds of information a dictionary can provide, have the class or groups within the class prepare a small dictionary of teenage slang. (Note: this activity need not actually be carried out, but can be discussed as a hypothetical case. It might also be used as an essay examination question for the unit.)
The class will then have to decide on the purpose of the dictionary; whether it will be perscriptive or descriptive; how many status labels to use, if any; what kind of audience to assume. Further considerations might be: 1) For those words which are also used by the general public, shall we include meanings not used in teenage slang? 2) Shall we use citations or quotations to show the word in various contexts? If so, whom shall we quote? 3) What kind of pronunciation guide would be accurate, yet understood by the readers? 4) What is the etymology of the words? (Some will be neologisms, others old words with new meanings. If possible, obtain from a large public library some dictionaries of underworld lingo or jazz musicians' jargon. Frequently, they provide insight into the origins of words and phrases used by teenagers.) 5) Are our meanings for standard words examples of generalization or specialization? elevation or degradation? 6) How long will our ditionary of slang be useful and accurate?
(If students have difficulty realizing the changes which occur in slang, ask them what "slicker" means. Most will know the word only as it refers to raincoat. Then read to them an excerpt from Scott Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise (Charles Scribner's Sons; New York, 1920; pp. 34-36,) which explains the use of the word in the 1910's. The excerpt also indicated the difficulty of defininf such a word and how rapidly connotations and distinctions change.)

Name _____

Directions: Use the chart on the next page and a standard dictionary.

	If you were Johnson, to which category would you assign each of the words listed on the left?	Where are they categorized today?
abecedarian	(Standard English)	(Obsolete)
alamode	(Substandard)	(Standard)
babery	(Standard English)	(Obsolete)
cough	(Standard English)	(Standard English)
gossip	(Standard English)	(Standard English)
inane	(Standard English)	(Standard English)
nincompoop	(Standard or maybe non-standard)	(Standard English)
puisne	(Standard English)	(Obsolete)
usquebaugh	(Standard English)	(Obsolete)
viz	(Substandard)	(Standard or Formal)

Unit 805
Appendix A

For Project English (MC) Use;

Adapted from: Priscilla Tyler, "An English Teacher Looks at Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary" Word Study, 38:4, April, 1963 page 5.

A MODEL OF LANGUAGE

1755	Archaic "...decreasingly used after 1755..."	Slang "...current coinages other than artistic..."	1961
Obsolete "...in the literary tradition, but not used by a speaker in his own speech..."	**STANDARD ENGLISH** "The consensus language of literary and literate users of English the world over in the 20th century and in the British-American literary tradition since 1755." "...spans two hundred years in our language..."		**Non-Standard** "...uses not recognized in SE, but appearing sporadically in the language of SE speakers.
	SUBSTANDARD "Dialect uses never appearing in standard English except as mistakes..."		

Unit 805
Appendix B

Questions for the chart: "A Model of Language"

A. Look at the differences in terms:

obsolete
archaic
standard English
slang
sub-standard English
non-standard English

B. What is the major difference between <u>obsolete</u> and <u>archaic</u>?

(Obsolete words are not present in speech, but exist only in the literature of a past period; archaic words exist in speech, but are used less and less frequently.)

C. What is the difference between <u>standard</u> and <u>non-standard English</u>?

(see defintions on chart)

D. What is the difference between <u>sub-standard</u> and <u>non-standard</u>?

(Sub-standard usage never appear in SE except as a mistake; non-standard usages are generally <u>newer terms</u> sporadically appearing in SE; if used frequently enough, they become SE words.)

SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS:

I. Directions: Below are a series of statements about language. Read them carefully and determine whether you think the writer would prefer a prescriptive and descriptive dictionary and why. In justifying your answer, refer specially to those things in the statement which led you to your conclusion.

1. "The English language has been corrupted by advertising men, song writers, masters of ceremony, sports reporters."

2. "Perhaps the most flagrant example of lexicographic irresponsibility is the undiscriminating listing of 'that most monstrous of all non-words irregardless'."

3. "There is no resisting new usage if they gain acceptance, nor is there any evidence that discouragement has had any effect. Let us remember that blizzard was once slang."

4. "Our attitude toward language merely reflects our attitude toward more basic matters. It is not terribly important whether we use "ain't" or "like" instead of "as"--- except as symptoms of a general decay in values. If everything is a matter of taste and preference and usage, then we are robbing ourselves of all righteous indignation against evil."

5. "Whether you or I or others who fixed our linguistic notions several decades ago like it or not, the contemporary English language of the Nineteen Sixties---the language we have to live with, the only language we have to survive with---is not the language of the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties."

II. Directions: Read Ambrose Bierce's defintion of lexicographer and answer the following questions. Bierce wrote: "Apestilent fellow who, under the pretense of recording some particular stage in the development of a language, does what he can to arrest its growth, stiffen its flexibility and mechanize its methods.

1. What does Bierce say lexicographers see as their function?

2. Is this function prescriptive or descriptive?

3. What, specifically, in your study of lexicography supports what Bierce says?

4. Do you know of any exceptions to Bierce's statement?

5. What does Bierce believe is the proper role of the lexicographer? Quote a statment from the excerpt to support your point.

6. Does Bierce think their function should be prescriptive or descriptive?

7. What does Bierce believe to be the extent of the dictionary's power to influence the reader's speaking and writing habits? (Agian, support your point with specific reference to the article.) Do you agree or diagree? Why?

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